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A determination of the amount of attention given to generally accepted goals for teacher education as reported in professional literature and the extent to which these goals are being achieved in a number of selected colleges in Pennsylvania. Attention was centered on how goals are being pursued.

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THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOALS OF ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION ARE BEING ACHIEVED BY THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA

- Harry N. Gasser -

Introduction to the Study

The pre-service education of elementary teachers has received much attention by educators throughout the world during the last decade. The preparation of elementary teachers for the nation's schools is a major issue among people engaged in teacher-education in this Country. This issue has been magnified and will continue to be of concern to American educators as long as the acute shortage of adequately prepared teachers continues.

A program of teacher education that will adequately prepare prospective elementary-school teachers must be a continuously evolving program. It should be a program that will provide for the development of desirable personality traits; give an understanding of and experience in directing a teaching-learning situation; and develop teacher competency based upon sound psychological and sociological principles. It is becoming increasingly important that teacher-education programs be evaluated with respect to the established goals of the curricula and to the achievement of these goals. This study was undertaken to find out how much attention is being given to the generally accepted goals for teacher education as reported in the professional literature and to determine the extent to which these goals are being achieved in a number of selected colleges in Pennsylvania. Attention was centered on how the goals are being pursued. Sixty-eight interviews were held in twenty-six teacher education colleges in Pennsylvania.

The professional literature seemed to indicate general agreement among the writers on the goals of teacher education. However, some controversy does exist among educators as to just how these goals are to be achieved. One point of disagreement centers around the question of how much time should be allotted to general and professional education.

Procedures

The procedures followed in this study consisted of six steps:

1. Reviewing books, pamphlets, college catalogs and bulletins, professional periodicals and current literature.

2. Formulating a list of twenty-two goals for a teacher-education program.

3. Developing an Interview Check-Sheet designed to measure acceptance and achievement of the goals.

4. Arranging for the visiting colleges to interview administrators, staff members and students.

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5. Analyzing and summarizing the data collected.

6. Drawing conclusions based on the findings and making recommendations for the improvement of the programs in the colleges participating in the study.

Summary of the Findings

The goals received an acceptance score of 4.0. On the scale used (1.0-5.0) this indicated the persons interviewed considered the goals to be of considerable importance.

Goal 13 relating to research, was questioned most frequently by the administrators and faculty members interviewed. They doubted the wisdom of attempting much real educational research in the under-graduate college whose budget demands full teaching loads and whose function is to educate its own students. The students accepted the goals as being of considerable importance.

Goal 21 relating to evaluative instruments that can be used to predict teaching success, received an acceptance mean score of 4.3. The consensus of opinion among faculty members and administrators was that valid evaluation instruments to predict teaching success are not available. However, this goal received a mean score of 3.2 achievement. This result was based on the use and success of evaluation procedures and instruments being employed. One administrator commented, "Should valid instruments for predicting teaching success become available, what price the judgment of administrators?"

All goals except goal 13 were thought to be of considerable importance and received almost full acceptance, by the interviewees.

From the data gathered it was found that the persons interviewed felt satisfactory achievement of the goals is being attained in their respective programs.

Although there were great differences in the programs investigated, certain patterns in practice and opinion were discernible. For instance, the same courses, methods and kinds of experiences were offered in the different colleges, yet these courses, methods and experiences did vary in content and organization. Student teaching was offered in each of the colleges, yet it ranged from one hour per day to full-time for a semester.

Since a complete list of these experiences offered in preparing teachers can be found in the Appendix of the study, no attempt will be made to itemize them here.

Essentially, the activities engaged in by the students were directed toward achieving three major goals. First, to make the principles of teaching more meaningful; second, to develop a better understanding of child growth and behavior; and third, to develop teaching skill through real experiences.

Conclusion

This study was a survey of teacher education in the colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. The preparation of teachers as affected by the administrative organization, the staff, the curriculum, the student personnel services and the evaluative procedures employed was investigated. Special attention was given to the curriculum for elementary education majors.

The conclusions reached are based on the findings of this study.

1. The staff members engaged in preparing teachers are making a sincere effort to improve themselves personally and professionally. While faculty members utilize the research pertinent to their respective fields they are not engaging in research to substantiate previous research findings.

2. There is a need for teacher-education institutions to develop a well defined, clearly understood list of goals. Each college should develop its programs and procedures with regard to its goals and each should evaluate its achievement in terms of the established goals.

3. Administrators in the teacher-education institutions recognize the need for stimulating initiative and experimentation among their faculties but do not have any organized programs for doing so. In-service programs for professional growth of faculty members is limited to faculty meetings and committee assignments. Effective channels of communication among faculty, students, and administration are not well organized.

4. The public schools and public school personnel are being used primarily during the student teaching experience. Many colleges are attempting to prepare teachers wholly within the confines of the college classroom and the college campus. Laboratory experiences should be an integral part of a teacher's preparation and should begin in the first year. Public school teachers, supervisors, and administrators, staff members outside of the Department or School of Education, and persons in other professions in the community should be called upon to supplement the instructional program. Community resources are not being utilized as much as they might be.

5. Many institutions think of student teaching as being an experience apart rather than an integral part of the preprofessional preparation of teachers.

6. The number of college supervisors for student teaching is inadequate. Colleges operating campus laboratory schools have a larger proportion of college personnel participating in the student teaching program than those using only off-campus schools.

7. Programs of study for elementary education majors vary from an accumulation of enough semester credit hours for graduation and certification to a highly-organized and well-planned sequence.

8. The student personnel services and guidance programs are designed primarily to provide educational guidance and counseling. The guidance programs in the colleges visited included admission, orientation and placement services. There is little or no attention being given to the areas of recruitment, registration services, progressive selection and retention processes and follow-up services. Special services which contribute to the student's personal and social well-being such as: health services, housing and food facilities, religious life and special clinical services are provided for a very limited number of students.

9. Evaluative procedures and instruments for measuring the achievement of teacher education programs and individual student growth are inadequate. Functional and thorough evaluative instruments need to be developed to appraise student accomplishment. Some effective means should be employed to organize and implement an institutional self-evaluation study. This study should be designed to assure continuous re-examination of the total program.

Recommendations

1. A formal application should be made for admission to junior class standing. This application should be reviewed by a committee of more than one faculty member of the elementary education division. A personal interview of the applicant by at least one faculty member should be made before junior standing is granted.

2. A self-evaluation program designed to study the apparent weaknesses of teacher education should be instituted by the teacher-education institutions in Pennsylvania. This might be achieved in cooperation with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the National Accrediting Association of the National Education Association.

3. Each teacher-education institution in Pennsylvania should organize visiting committees whose main function would be to visit at least one sister-institution a year. The purpose of these visits would be to exchange ideas and to discuss issues and problems relating to their primary task, that of preparing teachers. Reports of these visitations could serve as topics for discussion at faculty meetings.

4. A State Chapter of the Association for Student Teaching should be established in Pennsylvania. This organization could serve as the sponsoring agency for bringing together college personnel engaged in preparing and supervising prospective teachers.

5. More effective ways should be devised for securing more adequate facilities, increased staff and greater financial resources for teacher education.

6. The programs of study for elementary education majors should not be separated into general and professional education, but should be thought of as containing elements of each. All programs should be broadened to include field laboratory experiences which will bring prospective teachers into a closer working relationship with children in the public schools.